

Writer-Editor, GS-1082-7/9/11/12
APHIS Legislative and Public Affairs
Executive Communications
revised Feb. 2006

1. Drafting Letters
2. Writing Hot Issue Briefings
3. Writing Speeches and Talking Points
4. Working Relationships, Team Work and Civil Rights
5. Administrative/Other Duties

Note: For the key work results elements (elements 1-3) this plan has standards for FULLY SUCCESSFUL covering all grades levels in the career ladder, with additional measures that are specific to each grade level.

Element 1

Drafting Letters:

The Writer-Editor is responsible for drafting letters in response to Congressional, stakeholder, industry and other public inquiries on behalf of the Secretary, the Under Secretary, and the Administrator.

Alignment: This element supports Legislative and Public Affairs' mission of providing high quality and timely communications products that effectively communicate USDA and APHIS programs, policies, goals, and priorities.

Evaluation is based on the supervisor's review of drafts and comments received during the correspondence clearance process. Results and measures for FULLY SUCCESSFUL – in the judgment of the supervisor, in almost all cases:

- Data Gathering:
 - The best available source for information is correctly identified based on a sound analysis of the incoming letter.
 - Sources are contacted promptly (within 1-2 days if available) and briefed on the incoming letter and the information needed to respond.
 - The Writer-Editor:
 - is effective in eliciting the appropriate information from the source.
 - obtains additional information promptly when needed.
 - Information obtained from sources is responsive to the issue(s) raised in incoming letter.
- Draft Response:
 - The issues raised in incoming letter are fully and appropriately addressed in the draft.
 - No extraneous information is included.
 - Draft reflects correct determination on where approved standard language can be used and where nonstandard language should be created instead.

- Information in the draft accurately reflects information provided from sources, and USDA and APHIS policies, goals and priorities and any political or other sensitivities.
- The draft is consistent with EC style guidelines and adheres to rules of the GPO Style Manual.
- The tone of the draft is appropriate to the audience and the situation.
- The draft is concise, presents information in a well-organized structure, and follows basic rules of good writing.
- Work is reviewed to ensure that there are minimal typographical, punctuation, or spelling errors.
- Timeliness/Productivity:
 - Drafts that are identified as the highest priority are completed within assigned time frames, or an extension is agreed to by the supervisor.
 - Other drafts are completed in a timely manner.
 - Work output reflects a good balance between quality and productivity (on average, 4-5 letters per week depending on complexity and workload demands).
 - Work assignments are prioritized in accordance with EC guidelines, assigned deadlines, and the priority assigned by the Office of the Executive Secretariat.
- Draft Approval:
 - After approval of draft by the supervisor, the draft is cleared with sources (any content issues are resolved) and submitted for Agency clearance within 2 days, unless sources are unavailable.

Consideration for recognition will be given to Writer-Editors who consistently produce a high volume of high quality drafts and/or show exceptional skill in prioritizing and managing workload.

* At GS-07 level, supervisor frequently provides guidance in data gathering and draft preparation. Preparation of more than one draft for a letter is acceptable.

* At GS-09 level, work is conducted fairly independently. Less than 50 percent of letters are returned by supervisor without approval for significant revision or rewrite.

* At GS-11 level, most work is conducted independently. Data gathering is complete and accurate. Letters are well written and demonstrate an advanced knowledge of the subject matter and a high level of awareness of tone and nuance. Less than 25 percent of letters are returned by supervisor without approval for substantial revision.

* At GS-12 level, supervisory oversight is minimal. Data gathering is complete and accurate. Letters are well written and error-free and demonstrate advanced mastery of the subject matter and tone and nuance. No more than 5 percent of letters are returned without supervisory approval needed substantive revision. GS-12 writer also provides assistance to more junior writers in researching and drafting letters.

Element 2

Writing Hot Issue Briefings

The Writer-Editor is responsible for researching and writing short (1-3 paragraph) briefings summarizing high-profile Agency programs and issues for use in preparing senior USDA and Administration officials for meetings or travel to a particular region/State.

Alignment: This element supports Legislative and Public Affairs' mission of providing high quality and timely communications products that effectively communicate USDA and APHIS programs, policies, goals, and priorities.

Evaluation is based on the supervisor's review of drafts. Results and measures for FULLY SUCCESSFUL – in the judgment of the supervisor, in almost all cases:

- Draft briefing is a clear, concise, accurate summary of current information on assigned topic.
- The level of detail contained and tone/scope of the briefing is appropriate to the level of requesting office (White House, Secretary, Under Secretary). Draft reflects awareness of the audience the requesting official will be addressing (if the audience is known).
- Draft covers any controversial aspects of issue.
- Work is proofread to ensure minimal typographical, punctuation, and spelling errors.
- After supervisor's review, briefing is cleared with program source(s) to ensure factual accuracy.
- All deadlines are met except those for which supervisor agrees on need for delay.

* At GS-07 level, supervisor frequently provides guidance in data gathering and draft preparation. Preparation of more than one draft is acceptable.

* At GS-09 level, work is conducted fairly independently. Less than 50 percent of briefings are returned by supervisor without approval for significant revision or rewrite.

* At GS-11 level, most work is conducted independently. Data gathering is complete and accurate, and briefings are well written. Less than 25 percent of briefings are returned by supervisor without approval for substantial revision.

* At GS-12 level, supervisory oversight is minimal. Data gathering is complete and accurate. Briefings are well written and error-free and demonstrate an advanced skill for concision. No more than 5 percent of briefings are returned without supervisory approval needed substantive revision. GS-12 writer also provides assistance to more junior writers in researching and drafting briefings.

Element 3

Writing Speeches and Talking Points

The Writer-Editor is responsible for preparing speeches and/or talking points for senior APHIS and USDA officials for use in addressing a variety of USDA stakeholder groups.

Alignment: This element supports Legislative and Public Affairs' mission of providing high quality and timely communications products that effectively communicate USDA and APHIS programs, policies, goals, and priorities.

Evaluation is based on the supervisor's review of drafts and feedback from clearing officials and requesting office. Results and measures for FULLY SUCCESSFUL – in the judgment of the supervisor, in almost all cases:

- Appropriate topics for speech/talking points are identified based on contacts with various sources (for example, APHIS program sources, event organizers, other USDA officials)
- The theme(s), organization, and tone of the speech are appropriate. Information is accurate and is presented in a manner that is targeted to intended audience.
- Sentence and paragraph structure are simple and written for delivery to an audience. The draft is free of extraneous detail and background information.
- Work is grammatically correct and follows other basic rules of good writing.
- Speech is prepared and cleared in a timely manner and delivered by deadline of assigning office.
- PowerPoint presentation is prepared to accompany speech as necessary.

* At GS-07 level, supervisor frequently provides guidance in data gathering and draft preparation. Preparation of more than one draft of an assignment is acceptable.

* At GS-09 level, work is conducted fairly independently. No more than 50 percent of assignments are returned by supervisor without approval for significant revision or rewrite.

* At GS-11 level, most work is conducted independently. Data gathering is complete and accurate. Work products are well written and demonstrate a high level of awareness of tone and nuance. Less than 25 percent of assignments are returned by supervisor without approval for substantial revision.

* At GS-12 level, supervisory oversight is minimal. Data gathering is complete and accurate. Work products demonstrate advanced mastery of speechwriting techniques. No more than 5 percent of assignments are returned without supervisory approval needing substantive revision. GS-12 writer also provides assistance to more junior writers in researching and drafting work products.

Element 4

Working Relationships, Team Work and Civil Rights

The Writer-Editor is responsible for working effectively in a team environment and treating all employees, stakeholders, and the general public with fairness, dignity, and respect consistent with civil rights and equal opportunity requirements and the Agency goal of valuing a diverse workplace.

Alignment: This element supports the APHIS Strategic Goal of valuing and investing in APHIS employees

Evaluation is based on the supervisor's observations and feedback provided by customers, colleagues, and unit manager. For a FULLY SUCCESSFUL rating, in the judgment of the supervisor, in almost all cases:

- The employee demonstrates fairness, cooperation, and respect towards co-workers, office visitors, and others in the performance of all official business and promotes team accomplishments.

For example, the employee

- shares information and ideas;
 - listens attentively and explores ideas, opinions, and concerns of others;
 - provides constructive feedback;
 - participates constructively in team meetings and contributes to goal-setting and team projects
 - and attempts to manage and resolve conflicts, confrontations, and disagreements in a positive, constructive manner.
- The employee demonstrates sensitivity to cultural diversity, race, gender, and other individual differences in the group.
 - The employee performs all duties consistent with civil rights and equal opportunity laws and regulations prohibiting discrimination.
 - The employee demonstrates an awareness of EO/CR policies and responsibilities and ensures all work products reflect Department and Agency policies in this regard.
 - The employee keeps the supervisor informed of significant problems/or barriers to a fair, respectful, and diverse workplace.

Element 5

Administrative/Other Duties

The Writer-Editor is responsible for completing certain administrative duties that are essential to the smooth functioning of the office.

Alignment: This element supports the APHIS Management Priority of providing effective internal accountability.

Evaluation is based on the observations of the supervisor and input provided by the LPA administrative officer and the staff administrative assistant. For a FULLY SUCCESSFUL rating, in the judgment of the supervisor, in almost all cases:

- Activity based costing surveys are completed quarterly and give an accurate picture of the incumbent's work performed.

- Input is provided to the supervisor toward creation and maintenance of an individual development plan, which details desired training opportunities, details, etc. This plan is reviewed by the employee and supervisor at least biannually and updated as needed.
- Time and attendance records are filled out regularly according to regulations and guidelines in the LPA administrative manual.
- Requests for travel authorization and 202's are submitted at least 5 days in advance. If requests are not submitted within this timeframe, a proper justification is submitted for approval from the Director's office. Travel vouchers are properly completed and submitted within 5 days upon returning from travel. Other travel guidelines/requirements are followed.
- Records confirming completion of Agency training requirements are provided to the staff administrative officer.